CHAPTER - 2

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Though historically the place began to gain prominence, politically, economically and culturally when Hakka (also called Harihara) and Bukka in 1336, made it the capital of their small kingdom that was soon destined to become a powerful and vast empire by leaps and bounds, in South India, long, long ago, if we go by the good old deep-rooted regional traditional prevalent even to-day it was simply a grand capital of the Vanara Kingdom over a long time period and also the camping place of Janamejaya, the great grandson of Pandava Arjuna known then as Kishkindha all the while as late as 13th century even in epigraphical records of the region. This is not all. The place is mythically celebrated as a spot known by the name Hemakuta, of Shiva's meditation and later a unique place of Shiva-Parvathi (also known as Pampa or Hampa devi's) marriage. There are very many interesting spots associated with the eminent Vanara chiefs and other persons and the related events, such a Pamopa sarovara (lake), Shabari guha(cave), Anjanadri, Matanga hill, Tara (Vali's consort) hill, Rishyamuka hill, Sugriva guha, Vali bhandara, Vali kashtha or dibba etc. And the Virupaksha – Pampadevi temples commemorating the mythical account is the pinnacle of the tradition of the locality.

As if corroborative of the traditional account, explorations and excavations in the site since the time of Robert Bruce Foote, who is deemed as the 'Father of Indian Prehistory' have revealed a continual human settlements at least from the Mesolithic stage datable back to some 7,000 or 8,000 years before present. Many habitation remains of the Neolithic in the Chalcolithic stage (c. 1,800- 800 BC); Iron Age Megalithic (c.1000- 300 BC) and Early historical (c.400 BC-3rd century AD) are located in the vicinity of the Matanga Parvata, Masalaiahana gudda about half km. from the famous Vitthala temple, Nimbapura, near 'Chinchala kote' and Vali dibba also with an ash mound, a phenomenal feature of the early protohistoric culture in the Krishna -Tungbhadra valley, numerous protohistoric cave Paintings in the

vicinity of Sugriva guha, behind the Virupaksha temple, near Vali dibba etc., interesting and significant, large Buddhist sculptural panels with inscription of c.2nd century AD and 7th century copper-plate and 10th-12th century lithic records provide a meaningful outline of the pre-Vijayanagara culture and History of the region.

Therefore, not only the strategic location as well as naturally defensive topography with a network of castellated hill ranges of the locality but also the exceedingly potential tradition hallowing the land providing necessary inspiration and spiritual strength, prompted the two heroes to make the place as the center for the realization of their political ambition of building up a strong kingdom as a challenge to the existing political condition, then most disturbing and threatening.

Relating to the glorious historical period some recent excavations and clearance work, have disclosed remains of palatial buildings, ruins of what must have been once splendid palace complex, unique stepped water tank, gateways, etc. they are being restored and conserved in an exemplary manner by the Archaeological Survey of India and State Department of Archaeology. The building of the glorious city of Hampi speaks of man's infinite capacity and talent to restore and rebuild.

Travelogues and historians have admired the glorious period of the Vijayanagara empire in the Indian history, the pomp and the legendary wealth of the kings and the court, the exquisite architecture of the monuments and the temples. Others have described in superlative terms, the fabulous material wealth of the empire where the pavement shops/boutiques, sold pearls, precious stones and gold available in great abundance.

Hampi is an important religious center right from the ancient times. The region has been identified with Kishkindha of the Ramayana. Traditionally it is known as Pampakshetra. Siva is worshipped in the form of Pampapati or Virupaksha here. Hampi was the capital city of Vijayanagar Empire(1336-

1565) founded by two Hindu princes called Hukka and Bukka and symbolizes with last stronghold of Hindu ‘Art and Architecture’. The City of victory has been converted into the ‘**City of Ruins’** within span of six months by the Deccan Sulanates.

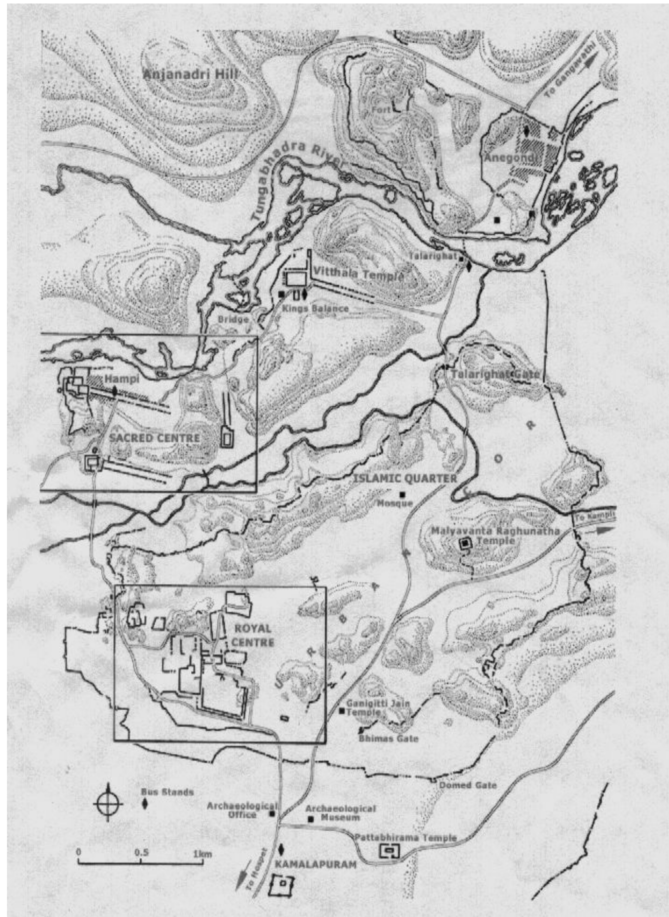
.

A copper plate inscription records that Vinayaditya of the Chalukyas of Badami was camping at Hampi. A few temples of the Rashtrakuta period found at the site indicate that it had gained religious importance by then. Many kings of the family of the Chalukyas of Kalyana made several gifts at Pampakshetra on the banks of River Tungabhadra. There are architectural remains of this period at the site. An inscription at the site reveals that the Hoysalas also ruled it.

Political scene of India in general and south India in particular changed completely in the early 14th century by the advent of the Muslim invasion. The Delhi Sultans conquered the Yadavas of Devagiri, the Kakatiyas of Warangal,the Hoysalas of Dvarasamudra (Halebid) and the Pandyas of Madurai. Entire south India was conquered by these Sultans. During such crucial time a new dynasty was founded by the Sangama brothers in 1336 A.D. A new city called Vijayanagara or the city of victory became the capital of this dynasty. This Vijayanagara city is now popularly known as Hampi. Four dynasties, the Sangama, the Saluva, the Tuluva and the Aravidu, ruled from this city till 1565 A.D. when the capital was conquered by the allied Muslim army. The city was abandoned after the conquest. The Vijayangara Empire was a mighty empire in entire south India. It was spread from the Krishna river in the north to three sea coasts in the east, south and west. Vijayanagara was a very prosperous city in its heydays. Abdur Razzak, a Persian ambassador, who visited the city in 1443 A.D. was wonderstruck at the grandeur of the city. He exclaims, "The city of Bidjanagar is such that the pupil of the eye has never seen a place like it, and the ear of intelligence has never been informed that there existed anything to equal it in the world. The bazaars are extremely broad. Roses are sold everywhere. The jewelers used to sell publicly in the bazaars pearls, rubies, emeralds, and diamonds.

1. THE SITE:

The site selected for the capital city Vijayanagara is endowed with beautiful natural setting and is drained by torrential Tungabhadra River. The group of monuments which have been declared as 'World Heritage Site' are located in the **'core zone'** measuring 41.8 SQKMs. as per HWHAMA Act. Geographically the entire site is divided into two parts. To the south of the River the site is characterized by Prime Archeological Remains, rich agricultural lands, Kamalapur Tank and Kamalapur Town. And to the north of River Tungabhadra the site is having an outstanding natural setting with several granite hillocks and the 'Royal Village' Anegundi.



The entire site during the Vijayanagar period was designed on the basis of Town Planning principles of spatial hierarchy. The Royal center, Noblemen quarters, sacred center, ceremonial areas like Mahanavami Dibba, Central avenues and Bazaars giving different identity to various spatial zones. The **'Prime Archeological Area' or 'World heritage site'** has been classified into the following major areas.



I. Sacred Center: The River and the hillocks on the north provide natural protection to the city. In

this area are four major temples, the Virupaksha temple, the Krishna temple, the Tiruvengalanatha (Achyutaraya) temple and the Vijaya Vithala temple. Among all these Temples the Virupaksha is still a living temple. The Krishna temple enshrined the image of Krishna brought from Orissa, as a War trophy by Krishnadevaraya

A panoramic view of Virupaksha Temple and its environ



and is historically important. The Matanga hill with Virabhadra temple on the top is the highest point in the region from where the entire city is visible. To the south of the Virupaksha temple is the Hemakuta hill on which several pre-Vijayanagara temples are located. This entire area is popularly known as the sacred center of the city.

II. Urban Core: To the south of the southern hillock is the fortified city termed as the Urban Core. This area consists of Royal Center and residential area of the common man. Here are remains of palaces, public buildings, noblemen's quarters, houses of common man, temples, matha's, ashrma's, wells, water architecture etc.

III. Sub-urbs: The capital city was surrounded by several sub-urbs. Each major temple in sacred center was a suburb by itself. The area around the Virupaksha temple was known as Hampi, this practice is continued till today. The area around the Krishna temple was known as Krishnapura and the long street flanked by mantapas was known as Krishnapurapete, i.e., Krishna Bazaar, area around the Achyutaraya temple was known as Achyutapura and the long street in front of the temple was known as Achyutapura-pete. Similarly the area around Vithala temple was known as Vithalapura. The area near the Penugonda gate was known as Varadajiammanapattana. The present Kadirampura was known as Kaderamapura. The present Kamalapura also existed during the Vijayanagara period.

IV. Roads: A large network of radial and ring roads linked different parts of the city. Some of these roads were very long running to several kilometers. Some of the important radial roads met in the plaza in front of Hazara Rama temple which is in the center of the city. A road starting from this temple runs to about 5 kms. and reaches Talarighat on the river bank. Most of these original roads are buried and are not in use. These roads pass in front of important monuments and through gates in the fort.

Vijayanagara is unique Hindu capital site. It contains natural heritage like river, hillocks, rich agricultural fields, canals and tanks along with the cultural heritage in the form of numerous architectural remains spread in a large area covering about 40 sq. kms.

2. ART AND ARCHITECTURE:

Structural activities at the site are also varied in nature. These consist of Defence Architecture, Secular Architecture, Religious Architecture and Civilian Architecture.

I. Defence Architecture: Traditionally Hampi is known to have surrounded by seven lines of fort walls. At least one complete line is seen now and some portions of three more lines are seen. These walls are built of thick wedge-

shaped blocks of granite. Two faces of wall are built of these thick blocks set one over the other without using any mortar. Gap between two faces of wall is filled with earth and rubble. There are several gateways and square bastions in the wall. The gates are of three types: main gates (hebbagilu), gates (bagilu) and subsidiary gates (diddi). Main gates are very large and are guarded by two flanking bastions. These have bent passageway, barbican and temples within the complex. Some gates also have bent passageway. A 'L' shaped wall is built in front of the gates to provide bent entrance and this system does not allow enemy to locate the gates easily.. Such gates look like bastions from distance.

II. Secular Architecture: Important structures under this group are several palatial buildings. Each palace or palace complex is enclosed in a thick, high,





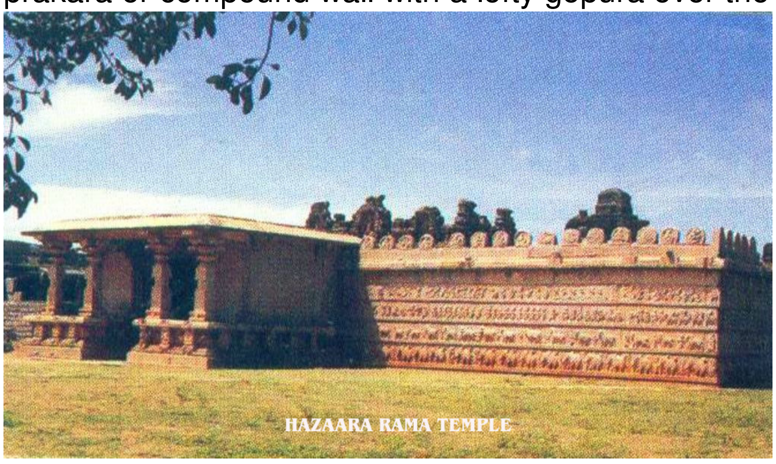
tapering enclosure wall. Some enclosures contain a main palatial building, subsidiary buildings like water palace or pleasure pavilion or store, well, water tank, watch towers etc. King's enclosure, Dannaik's enclosure, Mint enclosure and Zenana enclosure are such palace complexes. Public audience hall, throne platform or Mahanavami-platform, elephant stables, guards' quarters, queens' bath and water pavilions are connected with the royalty. There is



Elephants' Stable

another class of buildings occupied by the people of higher rank such as ministers, officers etc. These are enclosed in small enclosure walls. These secular buildings are Indo-Saracenic in character combining the Hindu and Muslim features.

III. Religious Architecture: Both small and large temples are found at the site. Large temples consist of a main shrine, a shrine for the goddess, mantapas for the performance of different ceremonies, all enclosed in a prakara or compound wall with a lofty gopura over the entrance. In front of the



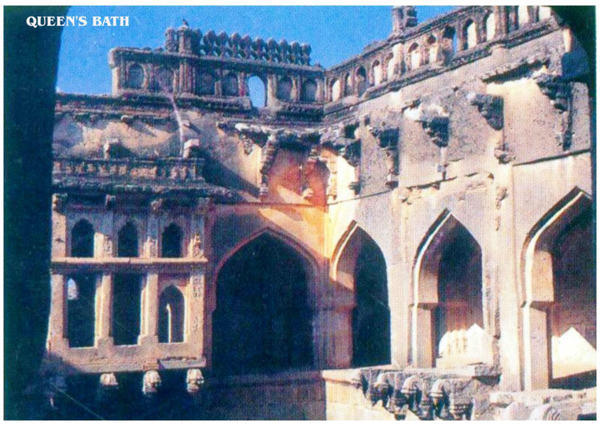
gopura is seen a long chariot street running to 500 to 750 m. flanked by mantapas and temple tank. These streets served as markets and mantapas served as shops. The Virupaksha, the Krishna, the Achyutaraya and the Vithala temples form such large temple complexes. The Vijayanagara kings introduce the lofty



gopuras over the entrances and they are popularly known as Raya-gopuras. The Garuda shrine in the form of a stone chariot is an excellent piece of art. Large monolithic sculptures like Narasimha, Ganesha and Veerabhadra are also found at the site. Other important temples at the site are Hazara Rama, Underground (Prasanna Virupaksha), Kodandarama, Pattabhirama, Mulyavanta Raghunatha and Jaina temples. There are pre-Vijayanagara temples on the Hemakuta hill and to the north of the Virupaksha temple. A considerable number of Muslims also lived in the

city. Several tombs, graves and mosques are seen among the monuments at the site.

IV. Civilian Architecture: Apart from the religious monuments, there are





quite a few monuments of varieties in materials, form and style meant for everyday use domestic and public meant for use by the Royalty: Palace complex, Audience hall, pleasure pavilion, Secretariat hall, tanks, water ponds, royal bath. Many Architectural elements of the Indo-Islamic architecture vigorously developed in the neighbouring kingdoms of Bidar and Bijapur Sultanates. Arch with key hollow dome over the central roof, minarets at the roof corners, etc., were harmoniously integrated into the Hindu civilian architecture. This is emphatic in Lotus Mahal, Queen's bath and octagonal water pavilions etc.,